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ON PAGE 1

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CIA warns of need to block cheating US weighs plan to monitor SALT-

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WASHINGTON — The Carter Administration is seriously considering tough new provisions in the draft treaty to limit strategic arms that would be aimed at preventing cheating and increasing chances for its passage by the Senate.

Senior officials say the United States may seek to ban the coding of any data sent back from missile tests to engineers on the ground to tell how guidance and other systems are working. By intercepting and analyzing the data — or telemetry

— US analysts try to keep tabs on improvements in Soviet weaponry.

The draft SALT-2 treaty contains restrictions on certain missile improvements. Thus the monitoring of tests by spy satellites and other intelligence-gathering devices is considered essential to ensure the accord is adhered to, the officials explain.

"Unless the Senate is convinced we can verify with confidence the terms of a new treaty," one State Department official said, "the chances of ratification are not good."

The principal impetus behind a ban on encoding telemetry, sources say, came from Stansfield Turner, director of the Central Intelligence Agency, who argued that without it the United States could not be confident the Russians were not cheating.

He is known to have cautioned the White House that unless Moscow can be persuaded to accept such a ban, he would be duty bound to warn the Senate during ratification hearings of the immense difficulties of verifying the treaty.

But when Secretary of State Cyrus Vance was in Moscow for SALT discussions in October, well-placed officials said, the Soviets rejected an even milder proposal to ban encoding. It would merely have called for a common written understanding on what test data could and what could not be scrambled.

It was after the Russians turned down the part-way measure, sources say, that Turner called for a total ban. He is being supported by some officials in the Defense and State departments.

Sources say the telemetry issue is but

one of a series of obstacles that have arisen recently to bedevil attempts to conclude the SALT negotiations.

Another involves the Backfire bomber. The Russians insist it does not have strategic range, but all elements of the US intelligence community argue it does.

American negotiators have tried to persuade the Soviets, among other things, to agree not to increase the production rate of the Backfire through 1985, the life of the projected treaty.

The Soviets have said this may be acceptable, but they refuse to divulge the current production rate. When US negotiators said the American understanding is that the rate is 2½ a month, Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko said the Russians wouldn't argue with that number, according to a senior Administration official.

But the Russians have been expanding the plant that builds the Backfire, and a recent US intelligence exercise concluded that it could not be determined whether the rate is the same or has gone up, to anywhere from three to five a month, twice the previous understanding.

Failure of the Russians to provide information on their own programs is pointed to by some negotiators as an example of the kind of loophole that created problems with the 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) and Strategic Weapons accords.

For example, the ABM treaty banned certain tests except at existing test ranges. There the United States enumerated during negotiations when the Russians declined to do so. Later on, after ABM tests at a nonenumerated site in Soviet Asia were protested by the Americans, the Russians claimed the test range had long been in existence and it wasn't their fault the United States had failed to mention it during negotiations.

Another obstacle to a new treaty, Administration officials say, is the lack of movement in the Soviet bargaining position since Gromyko was in Washington in September.

Officials have passed word to Moscow that unless the Russians provide specific details on compromises they are prepared to make, there is no point in scheduling another Vance-Gromyko round of talks.

The Administration is concerned not only about the Russian technique of expecting new US proposals at each high-level bargaining session, often without substantive new Soviet positions, but also about the image being created in the Congress that the Americans are making most of the basic concessions in the last stage of negotiations.

Thus the United States is asking that new Soviet positions be passed along by Soviet Ambassador Anatoly Dobrynin in Washington before a new round of talks is scheduled, probably in Geneva.

The coding of missile telemetry became a pressing issue recently after the Russians encrypted several high-frequency radio channels during a test of the SS18, the largest ICBM in their arsenal. Sources say this was the first time the Russians have done that on the SS18.

A key provision of the SALT-2 agreement would prohibit major modernization of existing missiles, such as providing new guidance systems. Another important provision would restrict the number of warheads that could be placed on each ICBM.

But if tests of such improvements could be masked from US spy satellites, provisions would be a sham, some American officials argue.

Some, in fact, would go even further than barring telemetry encoding. They also would ban the use of low-frequency telemetry — which could only be read by ground stations on the test range — and would prohibit test data being recorded in a capsule on the missile and parachuted down to the ground to be analyzed by Soviet engineers — but not monitored by US intelligence systems.

Sources say the United States does not encrypt its missile test telemetry, but does employ low frequency signals.